



Reproducing-Resisting Race and Gender Difference: Examining India's Online Tourism Campaign from a Transnational Feminist Perspective

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Reproducing-Resisting Race and Gender Difference: Examining India's Online Tourism Campaign from a Transnational Feminist Perspective

In the introduction to their 1997 volume *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1997) offer a seemingly simple question for transnational feminist analysis today: "Understanding the various constructions of self and identity during late capitalism—when transnationalization confounds the postcolonial and women's relationship to it, and when fluid borders permit the mobility of 'free' market capital—is a complicated enterprise that cannot be simply invoked by claiming fluid or fractured identities. *What kind of racialized, gendered selves get produced at the conjuncture of the transnational and the postcolonial?*" (xvii–xviii; emphasis added). In this article, I argue that one of the most important contemporary sites of this production of racialized, gendered selves at the conjuncture of the transnational and the postcolonial—though underexamined by transnational feminists—is the arena of international tourism. Tourism today constitutes "the largest ever movement of people across national borders [and] the relations between almost all societies around the globe are mediated by this flow of tourists" (Urry 2002, 141). Moreover, as travelers from the global North increasingly turn to the global South in their search for something new and different (Gibson 2001, 19), international tourism builds on colonial-era notions of exotic and erotic people and places as "the desirable Other" (Aitchison 2001, 139), circulating images, symbols, and narratives that reproduce racialized, sexualized difference.

States themselves play a critical role in the mediation of transnational capital in general, tourism in particular, and what Alexander and Mohanty call "processes of recolonization" (1997, xxi). The postcolonial neoliberal

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Indian state is a particularly instructive example.¹ In the mid-seventies, the Indian state began a process of economic liberalization that culminated in the nineties. Today, the state places greater faith in the market, retreating from social responsibility toward the poor and exacerbating economic and other cleavages along the way (Oza 2006, 11–16). Amid this growing neoliberalism, the government has also identified tourism as a priority sector for economic investment (Hannam 2004) and seeks, especially, international high-spending tourists from Europe and the United States (Vardalos 2003). Thus, if travelers are increasingly turning to the global South for something new and different, countries like India are eager to oblige. But how will the postcolonial neoliberal state produce such difference?

In this article, I am particularly interested in the Indian Ministry of Tourism's current advertising campaign, intended specifically for international tourists, called "Incredible India." Following the increasing emphasis in the industry on using Internet technology for marketing, the latest phase of the campaign was launched in August 2007, when the Indian Ministry of Tourism turned to the video exchange Web site YouTube and released a series of promotional videos. While electronic media have generally "transformed the meaning of locality by creating complex images of distance, self, other" (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1995, 15), the Internet is distinct. Not only has it "drastically transformed the distribution and marketing of tourism products" (Choi, Lehto, and Morrison 2007, 118–19), but tourists themselves are increasingly using the Internet for their travel-related research (Alderman and Modlin 2008). But in the case of India, the growing social significance of the Internet in the transborder traffic in images of difference and othering has yet to be fully examined (but see Henderson 2007). Thus, in this article, I am interested in how the state's YouTube campaign constructs Indian difference for an imagined global audience.

In what follows, I first outline the broader transnational feminist literature, as well as the tourism promotion literature, with particular reference to India. While the transnational feminist literature offers a theoretical perspective that I argue is particularly appropriate to understanding the production of selves in international tourism promotion generally, it has yet to focus on such production. However, while a critical tourism literature has examined processes of othering for India quite extensively,

¹ I do not see the state as a monolithic or singular entity. It is a complex, variegated space with multiple logics and agendas. In this article, my discussion of the state is primarily concerned with the Indian government's Ministry of Tourism.

little of this work has focused on the complexity of the role of the state.² In this article, then, I aim to add to both literatures. Employing a critical discourse approach (Morgan and Pritchard 1998), I explore how the postcolonial neoliberal Indian state produces Indian difference and for whom.

Transnational feminist contributions to tourism promotion

While the term *transnational feminism* has been deployed in varied ways, I use it here as articulated by Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, who argue against unitary models of gender and feminism, to focus instead on “multiple centers and peripheries [and on] the relationship of gender to scattered hegemonies such as global economic structures, patriarchal nationalisms, ‘authentic’ forms of tradition, local structures of domination, and legal-juridical oppression on multiple levels” (Grewal and Kaplan 1994, 17). Two dimensions of this approach are particularly important here. First, it centers not gender but the imbrications of gender with other axes of difference, identity, and oppression (see Kaplan, Alarcón, and Moallem 1999). Second, the focus is on inequalities and oppressions related to historically transnational processes ranging from colonialism to the emergence of anticolonial and postcolonial movements to neocolonialism and neoliberal restructuring (McClintock 1995; Alexander and Mohanty 1997; Puri 1999). Regarding India, for example, scholars have written on the role of barbaric native practices such as Indian suttee in colonialist constructions of Indian difference and inferiority (Enloe 1989) as well as on the ways in which anticolonial nationalism contested and reworked such racialized, gendered notions to create new ideas of Indian cultural superiority and women’s place therein (Chatterjee 1995).

Some transnational feminist work has also examined tourism, although not in India. Kamala Kempadoo (1999, 2004), for example, writes on the racialization and sexualization within historical processes of globalization that inform phenomena such as sex tourism in the Caribbean. Focusing particularly on queer tourism, Jasbir Puar (2002) also highlights the significance of the colonial history of queer tourism, indicating the “neocolonial impulses of all queer travel” (937). While there does not seem to be an extensive focus on tourism promotion in this literature, an important exception is Alexander (2005), who writes of the racial, sexual,

² By critical tourism literature, I mean tourism scholarship that brings the lens of feminist, Marxist, postcolonial, and other critical theories to bear on the processes and implications of tourism.

and gender politics of tourism promotion in the Bahamas. Specifically examining gay travel guides, she identifies what she calls “a certain intransigent colonial relationship in which a previously scripted colonial cartography of ownership, production, consumption, and distribution all conform to a First World/Third World division in which Third World gay men get positioned as the objects of sexual consumption rather than as agents in a sexual exchange [and] white gay capital becomes an active participant in the same processes of nativization and recolonization that heterosexual tourism helped to inaugurate” (79).

This cursory overview demonstrates that the transnational feminist approach is particularly well suited for examining the production of racialized, gendered, and sexualized subjects at the conjuncture of the transnational and the postcolonial within contemporary international tourism promotion. Nevertheless, there has been little work on tourism promotion from this perspective, and seemingly no work on tourism promotion for the postcolonial neoliberal state of India.

The state of the critical tourism promotion literature on India

Although transnational feminism has paid little attention to tourism promotion in India, there is a rich literature on Indian tourism promotion that stems from critical tourism studies. This literature treats the state in two central ways. First, the bulk of this work emphasizes the power of extranational or so-called transnational actors, comprising those within the tourism industry that are external to the nation-state—entities I refer to henceforth with the imperfect moniker *outsiders*. Work concerned with outsiders positions the state as a weak, perhaps insignificant actor at best. For instance, there is an extensive focus on how international organizations, such as the World Bank, and multinational corporations have propagated tourism around the world (Lanfant 1995). This work argues that there is “extensive metropolitan domination of the tourism industry” (Cohen 1996, 59), with tourism promoters themselves being overwhelmingly white, male, and Western, and creating images for tourists that share this subject position (Morgan and Pritchard 1998, 169).

This emphasis on powerful outsiders, moreover, has shaped critical work on constructions of difference and processes of othering. Tourism promotion is understood as a “child of imperialism [through which] colonialism’s ghostly footprints continue to be visible” (Morgan 2004, 177). That is, tourism relies on problematic notions of difference that colonization and colonial accounts of the country have produced (Edensor 1998, 24–28). For example, “Almost all package tours to India include what is

popularly termed the ‘Golden Triangle,’ the circuit linking visits to Delhi, Agra and Jaipur [with an] emphasis on the past” (Edensor 1998, 27). This emphasis on the past is interrelated with orientalist notions of the East in general and India in particular as representing an ancient, mystical religion and culture. Of course, many scholars have critiqued such constructions as partial, simplistic reifications (Clarke 1997; Narayan 1997). Thus, the literature argues that this emphasis only perpetuates the orientalist equation of India with the past and the traditional in contrast to the West as the modern, the present, and the future (Nayar 2006, 215–18)—the only difference being that while Europeans invented indigenous traditions in order to justify colonial rule, tour operators do so for customers who want to experience cultures they see as timeless and unchanging (Silver 1993, 304–9).³

John Urry (2002) highlights the visualization of the tourist experience—the development of the gaze, or ways of seeing. The discourses produced by tourism professionals such as photographers and travel writers authorize different tourist gazes. Urry argues that the objects of these gazes are located in a complex and changing hierarchy that is dependent on the interplay between producers’ interest in the provision of such objects and the tastes of potential tourists. For their part, tourists are interested in everything as a sign of itself (i.e., signs of Frenchness, signs of Italianness; Urry 2002, 1–15). In this vein, scholars have noted that in orientalist tourism discourses on India, locals themselves become the objects or attractions to be gazed upon (Bhattacharyya 1997), and indeed locals’ difference from tourists is carefully signposted so that the attraction may be accepted as authentic (Nayar 2006, 196–97).

Within this broader focus on powerful outsiders, scholars argue that the state only perpetuates these problematic orientalist images (Henderson 2007). Indeed, Pramod K. Nayar (2006) notes that contemporary government efforts are based on the notion that India must develop a unique market position, image, and brand related to its ancient Vedic (Hindu)

³ Of course, a focus on the past and tradition is evident in the marketing of countries not typically associated with orientalism. However, in their comprehensive study of just how different countries in the global South are promoted, Charlotte M. Echtner and Pushkala Prasad (2003) found different central marketing themes for different clusters of countries. For countries associated with the orientalist theme, specifically India, China, Egypt, and Turkey, the authors highlight an overwhelming emphasis on the myth of the unchanged and an associated focus on built attractions, ruins, religious sites, palaces, and ancient monuments, as well as on mysticism, opulence, exoticism, and strangeness. While marketing for other countries may contain some element of these, Echtner and Prasad argue that there is a key difference in terms of the degree to which the past and mystification are emphasized.

civilization. Thus, the state's own strategies now look to orientalist imagery for marketing.

There is a second strain in this literature, however, that insists that the state actually constructs India differently than outsiders do. This work argues that in contrast to outsiders' focus on timelessness, Indian promoters themselves emphasize modernity (Bandyopadhyay and Morais 2005). This work also emphasizes other differences: specifically, that while outsiders sanitize the colonial past, the government actually emphasizes this past and struggles against it (Bandyopadhyay, Morais, and Chick 2008).

Collectively, then, this body of work has contributed some very significant insights on questions of racial and cultural othering, the role of colonialism, and contemporary neocolonial structures in relation to tourism promotion for India. But the question of how a postcolonial neoliberal state might promote itself to attract international tourists is a complicated, multifaceted one—moving beyond the simple issue of mere capitulation to outsider-created images, as indicated in the first strain of the literature, or resistance to these images, as indicated in the second strain. First, colonial meanings are not simply accepted or rejected on the part of anticolonial and postcolonial states but are negotiated in a complex, uneven process (Patil 2008, 2009). One might argue, for example, that the Indian state's emphasis on modernity itself takes part in Eurocentric, colonialist binaries of tradition and modernity. Second, the spatialization of identities evident in this literature, and particularly the binary of external transnational forces versus internal state forces, implies a homogeneity at the level of the nation that elides differences in terms of gender, sexuality, class, caste, religion, and so on. Such cleavages produce differing contingencies both within and beyond the physical borders of the nation, with differing levels of power in defining the nation, its history, and its traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Kandiyoti 1994). Third, the focus on racial and cultural othering neglects entangled questions of gender and sexuality highlighted by transnational feminists—as well as by tourism scholars who have simply not focused on India (see Pritchard and Morgan 2000; Aitchison 2001)—and how these issues of gender and sexuality might complicate colonial, postcolonial, and neoliberal negotiations of modernity, tradition, nation, and history. Finally, there are a number of forces, emergent particularly in the contemporary neoliberal era, that introduce new complexities for consideration of the questions I have posed here and that are critically important for understanding tourism promotion on the part of the Indian state today.

New Indias and new Indians in neoliberal globalization

If anticolonial nationalists focused on the superiority of Indian culture, the era of neoliberal globalization has enabled the emergence of a new kind of nationalism constructed around economic success in the global economy. For instance, despite the exacerbation of class differences and poverty with the neoliberal reforms of the last several decades, there is an increased focus on commodity consumption and the success of the Indian middle classes as symbolic of India's new place in the world (Fernandes 2000; Oza 2006). The men and women of this new middle class are much more individualistic, body-conscious, global, and cosmopolitan consumers (Chaudhuri 2001), and their consumption practices are "a sign of the promise of a new national model of development, one with a global outlook that will allow India to catch up with larger processes of economic globalization" (Fernandes 2000, 92). Moreover, the growing symbolic (and economic) power India has invested in its middle classes also extends to the economically successful diaspora in the global North. As one scholar points out, the Indian diaspora—particularly the wealthier contingent of those who live in the United States—is increasingly considered part of India itself, pointing to a new global Indian middle class (Radhakrishnan 2008). Thus, by the end of the nineties, the state had opened up every sector to nonresident citizen investments and extended the same fiscal concessions to them that it granted to its resident citizens. In 1999, it also began to recognize foreign citizens who claim Indian origin. For this group, the state not only would introduce visa-free travel but also confer special economic and other benefits. In 2003, the state even went so far as to grant dual citizenship to those in economically better off parts of the world, while ignoring those in Africa, Fiji, Guyana, and Trinidad (Mallapragada 2006, 222).

Amid this (transnational) economic nationalism, however, contemporary globalization has also generated a number of anxieties, which have been negotiated particularly on the terrain of Indian culture and gender roles. Neoliberal globalization has been accompanied by the rise of Hindu fundamentalist nationalism, particularly among the global Indian middle class, and well-to-do diasporics have funded fundamentalist activities back in the homeland (Bose 2008). In this context, a number of scholars have pointed to a classed, gendered process of working through new anxieties around identity, particularly via negotiations of Indian womanhood. Thus, we also see the emergence of the "new liberal Indian woman" (Oza 2006, 21) who symbolizes the new modern India but who is still tethered to the nation. She is a confident, assertive consumer with a global outlook,

but she still demonstrates Indian values with her focus on her roles as wife and mother (Oza 2006, 21–43). In India in particular, she is a middle- or upper-class woman who has the economic capacity to consume beauty and household products as well as the ability to develop culinary skills and take care of children, pets, and plants; she simultaneously works hard to keep her man and marriage (Thapan 2004). In the diaspora, too, she is an affluent woman who again maintains a balance between a global professional life and an Indian home life (Radhakrishnan 2008). Such constructions present possibilities for consumption-oriented empowerment for women. And yet, the tensions are evident in how contemporary men in India and the diaspora deal with their globalization-related anxieties. Steve Derné (2002) writes that these men now demonstrate their Indianness by emphasizing a preference for women's subservience.

Hence, if the critical tourism promotion literature has largely focused on powerful outsiders versus less powerful insiders, the emergence of an elite Indian diaspora in the global North, with its multiple connections to the Indian nation, complicates this binary. Indeed, the exacerbation of economic cleavages, the emergence of a new transnational middle class, and the classed, gendered negotiation of identity amid such flux point to the potential of multiple insiders and outsiders. The state's YouTube campaign, then, suggests new questions: Does the postcolonial neoliberal state engage in the same kind of othering that colonial and neocolonial outsiders previously have done and continue to do? Alternatively, does it produce new others? In short, how does the Indian state sell itself at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

Data and method

The Ministry of Tourism started to upload its videos onto YouTube in August 2007 and has added new videos since; as I write this article, there are twenty-four such videos, a number of which I examine in detail here. The YouTube videos vary in length from thirty seconds to twenty-five minutes. In my discussion below, I identify videos by their titles. In the case where several videos have the same title, I also identify a video with reference to distinguishing features.

Discourse is a vehicle for social and political processes, both reflecting and shaping identity, power, and social reality (Pritchard and Jaworski 2005, 4). Here, I follow Nigel Morgan and Annette Pritchard's (1998) discursive approach, which links power relations within tourism promotion to the production of knowledge and meaning. Specifically, I am interested in how the videos construct knowledge and meaning regarding what India

is like, what locals/Indians/nontourists are like, and what tourists are like. I watched each video in order to identify and tabulate depictions of people, landscape, built environment, culture, music, and visual or spoken text. I developed a coding scheme for each of these dimensions based on criteria that the tourism promotion literature identifies for India. For people, I first noted depictions of tourists (i.e., individuals shown engaged in various touristic and leisure activities such as visiting monuments and getting massages) versus nontourists (anyone else, particularly anyone shown doing nonleisure activities, including those conventionally understood as local, such as religious and cultural practices). In cases of specific local Indian customs that Indian (and other) tourists might be invited to participate in, such as yoga, I examined additional markers to determine whether these images were meant to depict nontourists, tourists, or both. For example, when the figure shown doing yoga appeared to be a local holy man with dress, hair, and other details to match, I interpreted this as a depiction of a nontourist. When the figure shown doing yoga was dressed in a yoga outfit one might purchase in a department store, I interpreted this as a depiction of a tourist. For nontourists and tourists, I further noted visual markers of ethnicity, gender, and social status. I examined skin tone, hair, and dress, as well as the kinds of activities they were doing, particularly in relation to each other, and any language used to describe them. Regarding dress, I took particular note of depictions of what appeared to be traditional (conventionally understood in the literature as native) and modern (conventionally understood in the literature as Euro-American). For landscape, I observed whether the scenes shown were more rural or more urban. In terms of built environment, I noted depictions of cultural and religious landmarks, as well as more secular buildings (such as office buildings). For local culture, I noted depictions of practices such as dances, prayers, and rituals, as well as everyday practices such as the production of handicrafts. For any music accompanying the videos, I observed whether or not it was traditional (i.e., associated with the sounds and instruments typically connected with the country). For text, I noted the language used in the video and the content.

After categorizing and tabulating depictions as noted above, I examined patterns in the representation of what India is like; what locals, Indians, and nontourists are like; and what tourists are like. First, I examined how all the elements identified above are combined in order to construct knowledge about what India is like. In different videos, the above elements combined to construct three primary themes: that of cultural richness and spiritual heritage (depictions of cultural and religious practices, as well as history), natural wonder (depictions of landscape and animals), and ad-

venture (depictions of nature sports such as white-water rafting). Additional themes include democracy (depictions of the Indian independence struggle) and modernity (depictions of urban settings, technological sophistication, etc.).

Second, I examined the representation of locals, Indians, and non-tourists. Nontourists are depicted in three central ways. First, local women and men are shown engaged in numerous cultural and religious practices such as tribal dances and ceremonies, typically in various kinds of colorful native garb. Beyond this, local Indians are also shown engaged in numerous everyday activities such as making handicrafts and working in agricultural fields. Local women are sometimes also shown simply smiling at the camera. Thus, in the first instance, both men and women locals are constructed as specimens of exotic difference. The second major depiction presents locals as servers—taking care of or serving tourists, largely through activities such as providing massages and offering food. A third depiction shows locals as political agents in the independence struggle. Within these three depictions, however, different groups of locals are represented differently, as I will discuss below.

Third, I examined language used and who is depicted as a tourist in order to make inferences about what tourists are like. In this way, I actually identified five different though overlapping tourist groups: general English speakers; English-speaking Euro-Americans; English-speaking Indian elites, which are composed of diasporic Indians located in the global North and English-speaking domestic Indians; Hindi-speaking Indians, including those inside and outside of India; and non-Indian groups interested in Buddhism. Indeed, constructions of what India is like and what locals, Indians, and nontourists are like varied significantly depending on how tourists are depicted. I thus argue that each tourist group actually points to a particular audience imagined and addressed by the state, and each concomitant construction of India and locals points to a particular way in which that audience is authorized to gaze at India and Indianness. Below, I discuss broader patterns in the construction of a particular gaze based on intended audience.

I then paid attention to the differential depiction of women in particular. Noting patterns in camera shots, angles of vision, settings, activities, and so on, I argue that, depending on the gaze under construction, the state actually privileges different Indian femininities.

Finally, in order to gain some (limited) sense of how viewers might understand the videos, I also examined the comments posted by video viewers on YouTube. As of August 13, 2009, YouTube statistics indicate

that the twenty-four videos were viewed collectively a total of 664,701 times, and there were 276 comments posted. While these comments of course represent just a tiny fraction of video viewers, they still give some clues to the reactions of those viewers who felt compelled to post a comment. In what follows, I also highlight central themes in viewers' posted comments.

Findings: Multiple gazes on India and Indianness

For general English speakers: Racialization, sexualization, and dignity

The literature on tourism has pointed out that the primary promotion images for India involve orientalist notions of exoticism, spirituality, and timelessness, and in the videos addressing general English speakers, which include English-speaking Euro-Americans and English-speaking Indian elites, the state largely reproduces these images. Indeed, the central theme in these videos is that of India as a land of cultural and spiritual richness. A recent study on religion in Indian tourism promotion argues that India is portrayed as a religiously diverse country in which Hinduism prevails (Bandyopadhyay, Morais, and Chick 2008). The videos for general English speakers that I examine here largely conform to these findings, detailing the existence of a number of religions but also positioning Hinduism as the base of Indian culture. In addition, Islam and Christianity are both portrayed as religions that came from elsewhere in relation to Hinduism, which is indigenous.

This Hindu-dominated spiritual heritage is understood as interchangeable with India's cultural heritage, and both are defined as ancient and timeless. In alignment with the colonial history of these images, there are also repeated references to various colonial figures and places. For example, the twenty-five-minute documentary *Timeless India* begins thus: "When Christopher Columbus discovered America, it is said he was disappointed, for the place he was really looking for was this, the coast of Malabar, India's fabled spice coast."⁴ With a British accent, the male narrator refers to Calcutta as "tropical London" and Bombay as "Manhattan." The video continues: "Around every corner, there is always some festival. . . . You feel like you are in a film directed by an Oriental Cecil B. DeMille." According to this video, India is enigmatic and alluring: "An essential truth about India [is that] every time you think you've seen the real India,

⁴ Indian Ministry of Tourism, *Timeless India*, YouTube video, 24:56, posted by "india," August 8, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arn9UV989jI>.

it decides to show you another one of its faces. . . . It is the land of many faces, some seen, some unseen, but once they've looked you in the eye, you may never be quite the same."

A second central theme is natural wonder. Feminist geographers have highlighted the ways in which male colonialists gendered and sexualized the spaces they sought to conquer (Rose 1993), and here too the land is described as a "gentle land" in *Timeless India*, "paradise unexplored" in *NorthEast India—a Documentary*, and a "fascinating, haunting, rustic beauty . . . unseen, unspoken, unknown" in *Indian Wildlife*.⁵

A third theme is adventure and leisure, and here tourists are encouraged to remake the sacred and unknown land into an arena for white-water sports, hiking, and relaxing in spas in *NorthEast India—a Documentary*. Finally, a fourth theme, departing significantly from the others, is democracy. Two videos in particular, *Indian Freedom Fighters* and *150 Years of India's Freedom Struggle*, represent key figures and sites of the independence movement.⁶ Thus, while these videos largely conform to the colonialist images cited in the literature, they also disrupt colonial images to some extent.

Accompanying these images of what India is, then, are a series of images of what locals, Indians, and nontourists are like. The predominant depiction is as specimens of exotic difference. This depiction is centered on women and men of various tribal groups from around the country. Within the broader Indian context, tribal groups make up 8 percent of the population and are culturally and politically marginalized, often understood as primitive by others (Oommen 2005, 37; Subramanian 2007, 146). A central location for tribals in India is the Northeast, where different groups have launched a series of separatist movements for a number of decades and where the state has responded with escalating violence (Oommen 2005, 190–95). Specifically, the state has passed a series of draconian acts, including the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1958 (amended in 1972 due to political unrest represented by the state as disturbed conditions), the Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act of 1976, and so on. Together these acts have created a condition of rampant human rights

⁵ Indian Ministry of Tourism, *NorthEast India—a Documentary*, YouTube video, 11:22, posted by "india," August 8, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqMcyWov5mk>; Indian Ministry of Tourism, *Indian Wildlife*, YouTube video, 0:23, posted by "india," August 12, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NCM76ZGHh4>.

⁶ Indian Ministry of Tourism, *Indian Freedom Fighters*, YouTube video, 0:31, posted by "india," August 7, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0vMSiTNOHo>; Indian Ministry of Tourism, *150 Years of India's Freedom Struggle*, YouTube video, 0:31, posted by "india," August 7, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IA2nW4hRLo>.

violations and (sexualized) violence (Biswas and Bhattacharjee 2001; Subramanian 2007, 191–201).

Despite these ongoing complexities, consider how the northeastern tribals are constructed in *NorthEast India—a Documentary*: “Imagine a people gentle, graceful, welcoming, at one with nature.” Here, the tribals are orientalized and feminized simultaneously, and depictions of bodies and spaces meld into one another, as the northeast is alternately “beautiful,” “magical,” “mystical,” “mysterious,” “exotic,” “romantic,” “graceful,” “lyrical,” and “unspoiled.” Depictions of the tribes are further accompanied by images of tribal women with facial tattoos and nose plugs, emphasizing their exotic difference. Indeed, the theme for the portion of the Ministry of Tourism’s campaign geared toward the northeast is titled “The Northeast: Paradise Unexplored.”

Scholars have discussed how in the imperial context, images of nakedness were associated with savagery (Mosse 1985), and when men are exoticized (e.g., when engaged in various rituals and dances), they are repeatedly shown with large parts of their anatomies uncovered. In one video, *The Jewel in the Ages of Time*, while the narration depicts the colonial history of India, a dark-skinned, seminaked man is shown climbing a palm tree.⁷

In these videos, the second main depiction of locals, as servers, moves from tribals to nontribals serving Euro-Americans and other Indians. Servers are typically women dressed in saris. Following the images of nakedness cited above, male servers—though less common—are again further exoticized by being shown in traditional village garb with large parts of their anatomies uncovered. Local Indian women are largely shown serving other Indians and Euro-American women. The much rarer images of local Indian men servers show them serving Euro-American men. When the tourists are marked as Indian, social and class differences between servers and served are further emphasized by differences in skin tone (with elites and tourists being lighter), dress, and the activity each is engaged in—leisure versus work. While these videos do not explicitly invoke the language of caste, more subtle allusions are certainly evident, as caste hierarchy is loosely reflected in occupational distinctions and class hierarchy (Chopra 2006, 196).

A third image, rarer than the other two, shows locals as political agents. Specifically, the history of the anticolonial struggle is shown by highlighting particular figures and monuments. In *Indian Freedom Fighters*, English

⁷ Indian Ministry of Tourism, *The Jewel in the Ages of Time*, YouTube video, 14:14, posted by “india,” August 6, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ws25oIA-SE>.

text on the screen begins: “One man ignited a national revolt.” Videos making visible this aspect of Indianness also depict political, cultural, and social activists popularly associated with the nationalist struggle in India from various parts of the country. These activists are largely Hindu and male, though rare images of non-Hindus and women are evident (see also *150 Years of India’s Freedom Struggle*).

Thus, the videos targeted to general English speakers perpetuate colonial and neocolonial “place-images” (Shields 1992, 61) of space, race, and gender. Tribal groups in particular are objectified via processes of racialization, feminization, and sexualization. Moreover, mainstream sari-clad Indian women are made traditional and servile, while particularly exoticized categories of Indian men are also made to serve. Racialized and gendered hierarchies further seem to determine precisely whom these servers serve. While for English-speaking Euro-Americans and perhaps others these videos simply recirculate older racialized, sexualized images of difference, the key point is that English-speaking Indian elites are now encouraged to take on a similar subjectivity. This is not to say that these elites have not taken on such subjectivity in the past—British colonials certainly encouraged an elite class to identify with the West in a number of ways, establishing them as an intermediary between the colonists and the natives. Rather, what is significant here is that such identification is now encouraged on the part of the postcolonial neoliberal state. Simultaneously, however, this same state also disrupts these colonial and neo-colonial images with a dominant masculinized Hindu nationalism. Ultimately, then, the state manages the tensions and contradictions of its tourism promotion strategy for general English-speaking audiences, displacing strategies of racialization and sexualization onto certain bodies while others remain unscathed. For English-speaking Euro-American and English-speaking Indian elite audiences, the state authorizes a gaze in which particular groups are exotic, erotic, subservient, and savage, while others command dignity and political agency.

For English-speaking Indian elites: Hybridity, flux, and the new modern Indian woman

Beyond general English speakers, the state also addresses English-speaking Indian elites in several distinct ways. As my above discussion of the emergent global middle class suggests, this audience potentially comprises a transborder community of diasporic groups in the global North and elite domestic Indians. The interpellation of the latter in English also makes sense given that access to the Internet in India is largely a privilege of the

English-speaking, urban middle and upper classes, with about 90 percent of Web sites visited by Indians also in English (Chopra 2006, 191).

A number of scholars have pointed to the in-between and hybrid location of this transnational group (Chacko 2001/2002; Schiller 2005) and, as I discuss above, what it means to be Indian is negotiated largely via women's gender performance (Chaudhuri 2001; Desai 2006). In the videos that address this broad audience, then, we see several attempts to reference these issues of identity and flux. For example, *Incredible India* begins with the Hindi greeting "Namaste," written in English on the screen.⁸ However, the script imitates an Indian aesthetic, framing the English letters with curved lines and accents to give them the look of Hindi script.

The greeting is offered by a young, light-skinned, well-groomed, makeup-wearing Indian woman. Beginning with an extended close-up of this woman doing yoga, the video moves to images of dancing in night-clubs, sunbathing, and Bollywood. Likewise, accompanying music begins as a slow, classical Indian chant that is eventually sped up and set to a fast, techno beat. The video ends with the English words: "Embark on a journey of self-discovery." Thus, this video references themes of hybridity and multiplicity. Even more, the woman seems to index shifting gender ideologies associated with the new Indian elite, which, as I mention above, navigate polarities of tradition and modernity with an emerging notion of the new modern Indian woman (Oza 2006). Another video, *Beautiful Monuments of India*, develops this modern Indian woman even further.⁹ Focusing on an individual protagonist, this video follows a young, light-skinned Indian woman dressed in a brilliant red sari and wearing a bindi (an ornamental mark worn by Hindu women on their foreheads). The woman is set apart from other women by her expensive dress, salon-style hairdo, makeup, and leisure activities. As scholars have specified, emerging gender ideologies—including feminist ones—mitigate notions of feminine duty and subservience with consumption-oriented themes of individual desire and liberation (Grewal 2005). The woman looks directly into the camera, and two white birds take flight. As she meanders slowly and contemplatively through stylized scenes of Indian culture, spirituality, and nature, her privileged, leisured femininity is contrasted with images of

⁸ Indian Ministry of Tourism, *Incredible India Intro*, YouTube video, 3:12, posted by "india," August 6, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGnXjgtGuuE>.

⁹ Indian Ministry of Tourism, *Beautiful Monuments of India*, YouTube video, 1:05, posted by "india," August 6, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyVDAUwdCE>.

village women engaged in manual labor. The video ends with a woman narrator saying in English, “Incredible India.”

Thus, in these videos, the state authorizes a gaze that joins images of flux with images of continuity anchored in hegemonic notions of Indian culture. Perpetuating long-standing gender-as-nation imagery, this juxtaposition is accomplished through the production of modern liberal femininities in relation to so-called traditional femininities. Yet while these videos privilege the former in relation to the latter, images of saris, bindis, and so on continue to tie the new modern woman to the traditional nation. As Tim Coles and Dallen J. Timothy (2004) write, tourism narratives articulate, to diasporic communities, “who they are and how they came to be” (13). In this case, I would apply this insight to India’s emerging middle classes as well, and I would also point to the profound gendering of this articulation.

For Hindi-speaking Indians: Patriotism, modernity, and the masculine nation

The state also addresses a fourth audience, Hindi-speaking Indians—of either the diaspora or the domestic population. Again, it must be emphasized that this group, too, represents the elite middle and upper classes that have access to the Internet. Two videos in particular are geared specifically toward this broad group: *150 Years of India’s Freedom Struggle (Hindi Subtitles)* and *Incredible India—Sare Jahan se Acha*.¹⁰ The language in both is Hindi. In *150 Years of India’s Freedom Struggle*, the central theme is the independence struggle. This video features figures and sites from the independence movement and is very similar to the English-language video of the same name. Also in this video, the focus is mostly on Hindus and men, though a few non-Hindus and women are present. It is interesting to note, then, that the gendered, Hindu-dominated national narrative constructed for Hindi-speaking audiences is very similar to the one created for English-speaking audiences. *Incredible India—Sare Jahan se Acha* develops these themes further. The English translation of the video’s subtitle is “Better than all the world,” referring to a patriotic Hindi song, which accompanies the visual imagery in the video. Moreover, while the aforementioned images of spirituality and traditional

¹⁰ Indian Ministry of Tourism, *150 Years of India’s Freedom Struggle (Hindi Subtitles)*, YouTube video, 1:01, posted by “india,” August 7, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ga56oaFXtE>; Indian Ministry of Tourism, *Incredible India—Sare Jahan se Acha*, YouTube video, 1:01, posted by “india,” April 21, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8mmXae8RBw>.

Indian culture are evident, they are mixed with less conventional themes of urban settings, military might, and technology, and the video ends with an image of the Indian flag. The emphasis on militarism in particular points to a dominant masculinized, Hindi-language nationalism. This nationalism presents a different sense of what India is, moving from images of India as a land of culture, spirituality, and natural wonder to emphasize the much more unusual themes of masculinized state might, modernity, and democracy.

Also, there are no images of locals serving anyone. Instead, locals are shown as modern and as political agents. Finally, *Incredible India—Save Jahan se Acha* incorporates one additional unique feature: it shows locals as joyful. That is, unlike any of the other videos, this video depicts nontribal domestic Indians of all ages, predominantly male, in both traditional and modern garb, joyfully engaged in laughter, friendship, and play. The images are quite distinct from other images of tribal men and women and nontribal women shyly smiling at the camera. Indeed, Indians as tourists are depicted as virtually indistinguishable from (mainstream, male) Indians as nontourists.

Domestic tourists engaged in activities such as viewing heritage sites are said to contribute to the construction and maintenance of hegemonic narratives of national identity (Pretes 2003). Whether geared toward domestic tourists or Hindi speakers in the diaspora, these videos demonstrate this insight, for in the gaze authorized here, colonial and neocolonial racialized, sexualized imagery is mitigated by themes of modernity, democracy, political agency, friendship, and joy. At the same time, these videos also point to the power relationships and silences attending hegemonic narratives of national identity, as non-Hindi speakers, non-Hindus, tribal groups, and women continue to be marginalized.

For non-Indian groups interested in Buddhism: Another India

Finally, the state also targets a fifth audience. Specifically, the videos *The Jewel in the Lotus*, *Buddhism*, and *Walk with Buddha* recount the history of Buddhism in India to primarily non-Indian groups interested in Buddhism.¹¹ Despite the hegemonic construction of the nation as Hindu, this

¹¹ Indian Ministry of Tourism, *The Jewel in the Lotus*, YouTube video, 13:54, posted by “india,” August 6, 2007, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJOL7_e3IVI; Indian Ministry of Tourism, *Buddhism*, YouTube video, 4:48, posted by “india,” August 12, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V35UUVs5t60>; Indian Ministry of Tourism, *Walk with Buddha*, YouTube video, 0:30, posted by “india,” August 8, 2007, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_rCMcExMen4.

campaign seeks to reach additional global audiences. The videos generally depict Caucasian Westerners and (South)East Asians as tourists. To this audience, India is constructed in yet another way: as the land of the beginning of Buddhism, with its own rich and unique history concerning Buddhism. Locals in these videos are primarily male monks and other devotees engaged in various rituals and prayers. Thus, these depictions conform to orientalist renderings of a spiritual land and culture—though this orientalism is distinct from the Vedic-oriented orientalism the tourism literature emphasizes for India. Moreover, following the male domination cited in specific Buddhist interpretations and practices (Gross 1993), the Buddhist practices depicted in the videos overwhelmingly show male monks.

Thus, while the Buddhist images fall outside the dominant nationalist narrative created by the state, as with the images created for the audiences above the gaze they produce reaffirms the image of India that this particular audience is expected to have and that the state would like to encourage. Moreover, because it is targeted toward non-Indians, this gaze does not threaten the hegemonic narrative of the nation produced for its citizens.

Multiple, contradictory, and relational femininities

If signs of nation rely on signs of gender (Yuval-Davis 1997), within these shifting gazes on India and Indianness, Indian femininities in particular are presented in varying, contradictory ways. For English-speaking audiences, traditional Indian women are often shown in full-length traditional dress, looking away from the camera, not smiling. They are typically presented in religious or cultural settings and engaged in religious or cultural activities, though a number are shown performing manual labor and serving others. In contrast, tribal women are typically depicted merely standing in natural settings, with a focus on their faces as opposed to their whole bodies, looking and smiling into the camera. Thus, for this audience, a dominant Indian femininity associated with Indian culture and tradition as well as subservience is primarily contrasted with an othered tribal femininity associated with nature.

The videos intended for English-speaking Indian elites foreground a new, privileged femininity, disrupting the positioning of the aforementioned dominant femininity and relegating it to the background. With their full bodies and accompanying dress shown in various cultural, natural, and social settings—directly in opposition to the more austere traditional femininity described above—elite Indian tourist women engage in prac-

tices of consumption and leisure. In many shots, elite tourist women are also physically positioned at an angle in relation to more traditional women. From this position, they gaze at the latter, who themselves never reciprocate. They also look directly into the camera, and they smile. While in the videos for general English-speaking audiences, such actions on the part of tribal women signify their deviance, tribal women are absent in the videos for Indian elites, and activities such as looking into the camera and smiling gain new meaning for the femininity that emerges in this context. Thus, the videos for this audience privilege an elite Indian femininity in relation to a more traditional Indian femininity, and this latter femininity's own other, tribal femininity, is now completely invisible.

Finally, when the audience is Hindi-speaking Indians, the traditional Indian femininity cited for English speakers returns. Unlike for English speakers, though, for Hindi speakers, this femininity is less austere and more varied. While traditional Indian women continue to be shown with their full bodies, in traditional dress, and engaged in religious and cultural activities, they are more likely to be shown playfully performing in traditional dances, cheerfully applying henna, and so on. They sometimes laugh among themselves and a few times even look at the camera and smile. Yet, for this audience, tribal femininity is almost entirely absent, and elite Indian femininity is completely so. Thus, for Hindi speakers, the videos present a traditional femininity congruent with their nationalist emphasis; presented to this audience, the videos construct a happily compliant traditional femininity that leaves even less room for other femininities.

The patterns described above point to the multiple ways in which the state constructs Indian femininities as objects of the tourist gaze. In this shifting positioning of traditional, tribal, and elite femininities, the meaning of dominant Indian womanhood, as well as its associated others, continuously moves. If signs of nation rely on signs of gender, the videos demonstrate the state's strategic deployment of multiple signs of gender-as-nation in the era of neoliberal globalization.

Viewer comments: Was the campaign successful?

Of course, the question of the state's intentions in producing these videos is quite separate from the question of viewer response and reaction to these videos. In order to gauge such responses, I also examined the 276 comments posted on YouTube for the different videos. What I found attests to both the power of the videos as well as their limitations.

The comments posted indicate four central themes in viewer reactions

to the videos. The predominant theme is an uncritical Indian nationalism focused on the greatness of Indian culture, typically expressed by individuals who identify themselves as “from India.” A second theme is the desire of those who identify themselves as not from India to be able to visit India. These two sets of responses point to where and how the videos are successful, and the final two sets of responses attest to their failure. Specifically, a third recurring theme is Hindu-Muslim and India-Pakistan conflict, whereby the often vituperative comments posted are only tangentially related to the videos, focusing instead on communal tensions and viewers’ opinions on the issue. Finally, a fourth set of racist comments, engaged in by viewers who identify themselves as non-Indian, denigrate India because of its “filth,” “dirt,” and “poverty,” and these viewers indicate that they would not visit.

It is interesting that this mixed response to representations of Indianness is curiously silent regarding the issues of difference and hierarchy within the nation that are of concern here. For example, there are no comments regarding depictions of women or tribal people. While such silence may indicate the ineffectiveness of the state’s representations, it may also indicate a greater uncritical acceptance of these images.

The postcolonial neoliberal state and the reproduction-resistance of racialized, gendered difference

Returning to the question of how a postcolonial neoliberal state might promote itself to attract international tourists, this article demonstrates the critical need to move beyond the emphasis on the overwhelming power of Euro-American outsiders over and against third-world states or insiders, hierarchical relations that the latter merely accept or heroically resist. Indeed, these videos demonstrate that the binary of the state’s acceptance of or resistance to transnational hierarchy fails to capture the discordant imagery of timelessness, progress, tradition, modernity, exoticization, political agency, dignity, and servility actually produced by the state. Indeed, the postcolonial neoliberal state constructs diverse, contradictory images of what India is and what locals, Indians, and nontourists are like, interpellating multiple audiences along shifting axes of insiders and outsiders. In the language of transnational feminism, then, the state itself engages in the (re)production of multiple centers and peripheries (Grewal and Kaplan 1994), each of which invokes particular logics of racialization and sexualization to create distinct logics in the contemporary era. While bearing the trace of colonial and postcolonial histories, the simultaneous and

shifting nature of these constructions distinguishes the contemporary neo-liberal period.

Two features of these videos are especially important. First, the more powerful outsiders are not only Euro-American but also members of the elite Indian diaspora in the global North. Second, the less powerful insider category does not encompass all of India but particular groups within India. Of course, if this latter feature is perhaps an attempt to contain processes of othering to marginalized groups, it ultimately fails: racialized, sexualized images of difference, even when limited to specific groups of others, eventually become associated with the whole of what India is and what Indians are like. From a transnational feminist perspective, then, the production of racialized, gendered subjects at the conjuncture of the transnational and postcolonial within the YouTube campaign involves a complex process of self-racialization and self-sexualization on the part of the state—to Euro-American as well as elite Indian audiences. The implications for the relationship between (elite) diasporas, domestic populations, and the homeland are profound.

Furthermore, if tourism involves particular discourse-authorized ways of gazing at objects that are marked out and taken as signs of themselves, this analysis demonstrates that in its negotiation of historic racialized, sexualized discourses, the state constructs multiple gazes and, as such, multiple signs of India and Indianness. For Indian audiences in particular, these are different ways in which audiences may actually gaze at themselves. To the extent that these audiences willingly participate in such self-gazing—as perhaps indicated by the predominantly nationalist comments posted by viewers identifying themselves as Indian—they acquiesce to the state's construction of self, identity, difference, and hierarchy. Moreover, each sign of Indianness is accompanied by a particular privileging of Indian femininity. Elite Indian women are even encouraged to gaze at constructions of their more “traditional” selves. In this gaze, it's important to note that both modern and traditional femininities are produced simultaneously in the historical time of neoliberal globalization, colluding with consumerist notions of modernity, progress, and female liberation. These images serve to hide the multiplicity and complexity of Indian femininities and feminisms, drawing from logics parallel to the imperial feminists of the Raj (Burton 1994). In the twenty-first century, then, the state both resists and reproduces racialized, sexualized difference, crossing and re-aligning statist binaries of inside and outside to point to new relations of power and privilege in the neoliberal era. At the same time, the multiple, often contradictory signs of India, Indianness, and Indian femininity point

to new possibilities for subjectivity. That the same Indian woman may now gaze at multiple signs of Indian femininity is an opening up of sorts—though of course not for tribal women.

These findings point to the need to further examine how neoliberal logics are reshaping processes of differentiation and othering in tourism promotion in general and for India in particular. Shifting economic, technological, cultural, and political forces, the emerging power of certain sectors of the diaspora, and the relatively new incorporation of regions such as India's Northeast point to new areas for research on tourism promotion in India.

Ultimately, these findings extend the transnational feminist literature on the production of racialized, gendered selves in processes of globalization. Specifically, tourism is a key site for the (re)production of difference at the contemporary conjuncture of the transnational and the postcolonial. Indeed, as tourism scholars have observed, the industry is "an Otherness machine" (Aitchison 2001, 144). The fact that governments in the global South are increasingly turning to tourism for economic growth only underscores the industry's significance. With regard to India, moreover, the state's YouTube campaign points to the strategic (re)production of scattered hegemonies having to do with race, sexuality, gender, nation, class, and culture in the contemporary era. For transnational feminists interested in such questions, then, the processes of tourism promotion can no longer be ignored.

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